

[Article G] Civil Rights Act of 1964

Background: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a culminating piece of legislation that answered many of the objectives of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1954, the United States Supreme Court ruled that segregation of educational facilities was not legal in its decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education*. In spite of that decision, a decade later segregation continued to be practiced across large parts of the United States. From restaurants to movie theaters and public bus stations, “Whites Only” signs continued to mar the landscape. Overturning these discriminatory practices was one of the goals of the modern civil rights movement. In the fall of 1963, momentum shifted public opinion in support of the civil rights movement following the pivotal March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

A year later, both houses of Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and President Lyndon B. Johnson signed it into law. The Civil Rights Act became law on July 2, 1964, and was a major step toward overturning Jim Crow segregation practices. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 further supported the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* and ended segregation in school, the work place, and “public accommodations” (i.e. restaurants, bus stations, movie theaters, etc.). Furthermore, the act prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, or national origin.

Opposing Viewpoints

“... the President of the United States has only yesterday signed into law the most monstrous piece of legislation ever enacted by the United States Congress....

It is designed to make Federal crimes of our customs, beliefs, and traditions. Therefore, under the fantastic powers of the Federal judiciary to punish for contempt of court and under their fantastic powers to regulate our most intimate aspects of our lives by injunction, every American citizen is in jeopardy and must stand guard against these despots.”

-George Wallace, “The Civil Rights movement: Fraud, Sham, Hoax,”
July 4, 1964

“This Civil Rights Act is a challenge to all of us to go to work in our communities and our States, in our homes and in our hearts, to eliminate the last vestiges of injustice in our beloved country.

So tonight I urge every public official, every religious leader, every business and professional man, every workingman, every housewife—I urge every American—to join in this effort to bring justice and hope to all our people—and to bring peace to our land.”

-President Lyndon B. Johnson,
“Remarks upon “Signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964,” July 2, 1964



Martin Luther King, Jr., shakes hands with President Lyndon B. Johnson moments after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is signed.

